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INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0990  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 8918  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7325  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8409  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1385  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0130  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0014  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0137  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001053

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2016  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [BG](#)  
SUBJECT: JMB CHIEF ABDUR RAHMAN SURRENDERS

REF: DHAKA 1012

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough, Reason(s): 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary: Early March 2, JMB chieftain Abdur Rahman and two accomplices surrendered to police after a 30-hour standoff inside an upscale house in Sylhet. Bangladeshis are expressing relief, while opposition Awami League figures claim the BDG staged the affair to mask its ties to JMB and pander to foreign quarters. Rahman's arrest, the civil aviation minister told Charge, is a big political boost for the BNP. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) At approximately 0715 local on March 2, Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) operations chief Sheikh Abdur Rahman and accomplices "Ridoy" and "Hannan" surrendered to police after a 30-hour standoff in Sylhet with Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and other police elements. Live TV coverage showed Islamist literature and a small quantity of crude munitions inside the house. Rahman's wife, two daughters, and a grandson were among nine persons who surrendered on March 1. Rahman's wife later returned to the site to urge her husband to give up.

¶3. (SBU) Last month, Rahman was sentenced in absentia to 40 years in jail for complicity in the murder of two judges. JMB is charged with a wave of bombings between August 17 and December 9 that killed more than 30 persons, including four suicide bombers. Police have now caught three of JMB's top seven leaders, with Bangla Bhai being the most senior JMB figure still at large. On March 1, police captured 26 JMB operatives in Gaibanda, northern Bangladesh, the latest in a series of nearly daily arrests now totaling more than 150.

¶4. (C) Bangladeshis are expressing relief at Rahman's capture. Others are praising RAB, which has spearheaded the BDG's campaign against JMB. Deputy Director of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) Major H.S. Shahnawaz told poloff that operationally RAB has "room for improvement" but it is far superior to the regular police because of their "better command and control." RAB, he said, understands that "it's cool to be more effective." BISS Research Director Abdur Rob Khan criticized the BDG for having once tolerated JMB and the likes of Rahman, and credited international and domestic pressure for forcing the BDG to take action. He asserted he was "happier" today than he has been in a long time. Rahman's surrender, he added, is politically beneficial for the BNP as it is a "good diversion" from recent controversies over the acute

electric, fuel, and water shortages plaguing the country.

15. (C) Awami League MP Asaduzzaman Noor told poloff that Rahman's capture is a good thing, but urged the international community to "look at what is happening behind this." The JMB has been around for a long time, he said, yet no BNP or JI member has ever been attacked; instead, it is always the Awami League who are the victims. Even if the Bangla Bhai is captured, JMB attacks will not be stopped, he predicted. A pro-Awami League newspaper, anticipating Rahman's arrest, made similar points. General Secretary of the Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council Neemchandra Bhowmik told poloff he welcomed Rahman's capture, but that it was the BNP government that created JMB to promote their political interests. "The Muslims still don't like you," but as a result of the arrests, "the fundamentalists will be demoralized," he conceded.

16. (C) During a March 2 meeting with CDA, Civil Aviation Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir welcomed Rahman's capture as a major electoral boost for the BNP as it heads toward national elections.

17. (C) Comment: It's no surprise that the Awami League refuses to give the BDG any credit for capturing Rahman, or that conspiracy theories have already started to circulate that the BDG stage-managed the affair, either to reveal his capture after striking a deal of some sorts or to make a point while POTUS is elsewhere in South Asia. Anything is possible in Bangladesh, but it's notable that Home Affairs Minister Babar, who presumably would be neck-deep in any conspiracies, was out of the country as this unfolded. Rahman's capture is a major development, and the BDG's

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assertion that it has "broken the back" of JMB is starting to look more credible.

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